DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 125 111 EA 008 439

TITLE	Report of the Small Schools Task Force.
INSTITUTION	Montgomery County Public Schools, Rockville, Md.
PUB DATE	Nov 73
NOTE	27p.; For a related document, see EA008440
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Administrator Attitudes; Advisory Committees; *Board of Education Policy; Community Involvement; Costs; Educational Finance; Elementary Education; *Enrollment Trends; *Expenditure Per Student; *School Closing; *School Size; Simulation; *Small Schools; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	*Declining Enrollments; Maryland (Montgomery County)

ABSTRACT

In March of 1973 the superintendent of the Montgomery County schools appointed a task force of community representatives, principals, teachers, area and central office staff members, and county government representatives to develop recommendations on small elementary schools. The task force concluded that school size is not the determining factor in the quality of a child's elementary school education. Other factors such as leadership of the principal, ability and dedication of the staff, and community support and involvement may be more important factors. It was determined that operating costs rose rapidly once a school drops below 300 students. Schools that drop below 300 are subjected to a detailed review and analysis that includes the following factors: modernization schedule, availability of space in nearby schools, transportation implications, long-range need for elementary school facilities in the area, articulation with secondary schools, and socioeconomic and racial balance. The committee examined methods of reducing the operating costs of small schools, for instance reducing staff and food service costs. Alternative uses of facilities were also examined. A process for addressing specific small school situations and the board policy on small schools are included. (Author/IRT)

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Rockville, Maryland

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REPORT OF THE

SMALL SCHOOLS TASK FORCE

EA 008 439

November 1973

Homer O. Elseroad
Superintendent of Schools

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Educational Program and School Size	2
Review of the Literature	2
Discussions With Teachers and Principals	3
Community Survey	4
Informal Survey of Junior High School Counselors	5
School-Wide Achievement Tests	5
Conclusions	5
School Cost vs. School Size	6
School Operating Cost vs. School Size	6
Annual Savings From Closing a Small School	8
Capital Costs	9
Potential County-Wide Savings	10
Options for Action	10
The Simulation Exercise	11
Reducing the Operating Costs of Small Schools	12
Other Educational and/or Community Uses of Elementary School Facilities No Longer Needed for Regular School Use	13
The Process for Addressing Specific Small School Situations	15
The Process In More Detail	16
Staff Implications	18
Conclusions	18
Proposed Board of Education Policy On Small Schools	19
Bibliography	20
Attachment 1	22
Attachment 2	24

INTRODUCTION

For about the last five years, elementary school enrollment in the Montgomery County Public Schools has been declining. Despite growth in some areas of the county and the need to build or expand some elementary schools in order to accommodate the growth, elementary school enrollment decreased from 67,155 on September 30, 1969, to 63,134 on September 30, 1973. The overall decrease is mainly a reflection of the declining birth rate of the past decade. In the "down county" area, specifically Administrative Areas 1, 4, and to some extent Administrative Area 2, enrollment in many elementary schools has rapidly declined.

Based on September 30, 1973, actual enrollment, 23 elementary schools now have 300 or less pupils, the enrollment level used by the county to allocate additional staff to a "small school"; and 14 of these schools have an enrollment of less than 250 students. It is projected that by the fall of 1976, 44 elementary schools will have an enrollment of 300 or less; and 26 will be below the 250 level.

In the past year, it has become increasingly clear that the declining elementary school enrollment and the increasing number of small elementary schools are problems that must be faced by the Board of Education and communities. On March 1, 1973, the superintendent appointed a task force to study this problem. The membership which consisted of 23 people included eight community representatives, three principals, two teachers, two area office staff members, five central office staff members, and two county government representatives. In his letter to task force members, the superintendent asked that recommendations be developed on this matter which might guide the school system over the next five to ten years. The charge also included the development of criteria for determining when schools might be considered for closing in anticipation of community reluctance to "give up its school." The superintendent asked the task force to make suggestions as to the process for "reaching decisions and seeking community acceptance regarding the possible closing of a particular elementary school."

The task force held its first meeting on March 29, 1973, and met throughout the summer and fall as a total committee or in subcommittees. After receiving background information and analyzing the scope of the problem, the task force divided into two groups to study intensively the educational program and financial implications of size of school. Utilizing community survey information, test data, discussion with teachers and principals, and input from other staff, the education committee explored the relationship of school size to the quality of the educational program and identified the advantages and disadvantages of small schools. The financial committee analyzed salary data and other financial information, defining the relationship of school size to operating cost. This group also examined numerous clusters of schools, each with one or more small schools, in order to determine the extent to which consolidation would be possible. From this simulation exercise, the basic criterion and several related factors were established as a means for analyzing clusters of schools and as a basis for decision-making. Finally, the task force developed a process of community involvement and decision making for use in determining the future of small schools.

The task force believes that determining the future of small elementary schools is one of the more important questions that the Board of Education will face over the next few years. Declining enrollment and resultant small elementary

schools must be viewed as a natural phenomenon in the evolution of the county. Through community understanding and involvement in the decision-making process, it can be faced as effectively as the problems of rapid enrollment increase, expansion, and boundary changes have been faced during the past two decades.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND SCHOOL SIZE

In its study of the effect of school size on educational program, the task force collected information on the quality of education in small schools as compared to medium and large schools. The intent was to determine if there are any unique advantages or disadvantages inherent in the educational programs among these three classes of schools. While no member of the task force considers the study either comprehensive or exhaustive, given the available time and resources, a sincere attempt was made to determine the effect of school size on the quality of educational program.

For the study, a small school was defined as one with an enrollment of 300 or less pupils, a medium school as one with a range of 300 to 500 pupils, and a large school as one with more than 500 pupils.

The task force drew on five principal sources for information for this study:

1. A review of the literature on educational program and school size
2. Discussions with teachers and principals assigned to elementary schools of various sizes
3. Data collected by the MCPS Department of Research in a community survey which was conducted in Areas 1 and 2 in February and March of 1973
4. Opinions of junior high school counselors gathered in an informal survey regarding concerns of students entering junior high school
5. Results of school-wide achievement tests, specifically data from the Cognitive Abilities Test and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature revealed a lack of data on the relationship of size of elementary school to educational program. A great deal has been written concerning educational programs in small secondary schools, but little has been accomplished in the way of analysis at the elementary school level. Part of this lack of research can be attributed to the long-term analysis required to reach valid hypotheses. Another factor is that there has not been a demand, at the elementary level, for such research. Thus, no one seems to be in a position to state definitely that the educational program at small elementary schools is better or worse than at larger ones.

What most of the literature on the subject has in common is that attention is given generally to measure of input into education and to "expert" opinions or attitudes on the subject. Quantitative measures of output or products of

education are absent. This lack of attention to measures of the product of elementary school education may be based in part on the lack of demand for this type of information. Also, however, in measuring program quality or determining optimum size there are inherent difficulties.

The first problem is to agree upon a definition or a reliable measure of quality. Second, even if a suitable measure of program quality is decided upon, the means of isolating size of school as a major factor of the output measured is most difficult.

The weight of opinion and the majority of recommendations by educators on elementary school size indicate that the desirable enrollment range of elementary schools is 300-500 students. While no one has absolutely "proved" this contention, there appears to be enough evidence to state that there are educational disadvantages, as measured by inputs such as effective utilization of resources, to small elementary schools and that there are greater educational opportunities, such as a wide variety of resources, available in larger elementary schools (over 300 students).

DISCUSSIONS WITH TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

A group of teachers and principals from Areas 1 and 4 were invited to discuss their attitudes and opinions on program quality and school size. About half of the group was from small schools and half from medium and large schools. Some had experience in both small and large schools.

Three aspects of school organization having impact on the educational program were explored in these discussions. The first, flexibility of school organization, concerned the ability of schools to adapt teaching methods, school organization, and personnel to provide satisfactory learning opportunities for each child. The second concerned communication between teachers, students, parents, principal, and community. The third aspect concerned the allocation of resources such as specialists, materials, and equipment.

The following advantages of small schools as perceived by teachers and principals supportive of small schools emerged from the discussion:

- The small school, especially one with declining enrollment and uneven distribution of children in grades, is more likely to utilize innovative teaching methods and to encourage individual teaching and open classroom situations with working groups that cut across grade levels.

- The small school is more likely to develop an "emerging staff," that is, one that reaches out to take on administrative responsibilities and has a voice in running the school.

- Small schools provide a "family atmosphere" in which teachers can know all of the children in the school and many of their parents and develop close, supportive relationships with both groups.

- The community has a close relationship to the school and is likely to provide volunteers and other support to the school, which may serve as a community center.

- The principal knows the staff well and can make maximum use of individual talents.

- Staff members are aware of happenings in the entire school and feel a part of it; a child may know students on more grade levels than would be the case in a larger school, thereby contributing to overall social development.

- Present staffing policies allot a full-time principal regardless of school size and an additional teaching position to elementary schools of less than 300 students with the result that more professional staff is available per pupil.

The following disadvantages of small school as perceived by teachers and principals supportive of larger schools emerged from the discussions:

- Staffing a small school can sometimes be difficult. When enrollment is declining and pupils are not evenly distributed by grade, allocating staff may result in awkward combinations.

- If there is only one teacher per grade (or grouping), little choice of teacher or teaching method is available to the student.

- A smaller professional staff has proportionally fewer diverse approaches and specialities to offer; staff members have fewer colleagues with whom to share ideas and experiences.

- Children are limited in contacts with others because the student body of a small school is more likely to be homogeneous than that of a larger school, as it may draw from a smaller geographic area.

- In small schools, specialists have less opportunity to group children with related problems. Since the specialist has to divide time between several small schools, time is lost in travel, and there is less opportunity to know the students.

- Since funds for books and materials are supplied on a uniform dollar per pupil formula for all schools, small schools are able to purchase fewer items and thus offer less variety of books, materials, and equipment.

The task force found that the advantages identified as pertaining to small schools were balanced by equivalent disadvantages and concluded that there were no compelling arguments either for or against small schools in carrying out the educational program.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The task force analyzed the results of a community survey which was routinely administered to parents in Areas 1 and 2. Responses to the questions asked in the survey were grouped by the task force according to the size of the school from which the parent was responding. There were 49 statements in the survey on which parents were asked to judge the effectiveness of their child's school. These statements dealt with areas such as communication, student social attitudes, and achievement.

It was found that school size was not a significant factor in the parent's evaluation of the effectiveness of their respective schools. Small, medium, and large schools received comparable judgments regarding effectiveness.

INFORMAL SURVEY OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS

In a limited, informal survey, junior high school counselors questioned students entering junior high about their concerns. While some of the concerns expressed, such as fear of separation from friends, new surroundings, size of building, getting lost, and being late for classes, may have been related to the size of the student's elementary school, there were no strong indications that size of elementary school was a contributing factor to the students' concerns in junior high.

SCHOOL-WIDE ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

The task force examined test data to try to ascertain whether school size has a bearing on school-wide achievement. Test data utilized were the Cognitive Abilities Test (Verbal) and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Composite) administered during the 1971-72 school year. These tests are administered to all students in the county in Grades 3 and 5. School-wide averages are developed each year in the Department of Pupil and Program Appraisal.

A study was made of school-wide achievement averages in relation to school-wide ability averages in Administrative Areas 1, 2, and 4. There was no evidence that small schools were more or less successful than medium or large schools in enabling students to achieve at or beyond expectancy.

The task force then examined the data to assess whether income level of families comprising school feeder areas was a factor in attaining school-wide achievement at or beyond expectancy. No evidence was produced to indicate that income level was a factor.

Therefore, the conclusion is that there is no evidence that school-wide achievement in relation to school-wide ability of students is influenced by the size of the elementary school or by the affluence of the school feeder area.

CONCLUSIONS

The task force concluded from its study that school size is not the determining factor in the quality of a child's elementary school education. Other factors such as leadership of the principal, abilities and dedication of staff, and community support and involvement may be more important factors.

While discussions with staff members identified some advantages of small schools, some disadvantages also were identified. Other data examined--community survey, informal survey of junior high school counselors, and test scores--gave no evidence that small schools are more or less effective than larger schools in the view of parents, are more or less successful than larger schools in alleviating student concerns about entering junior high school, or are more or less effective than larger schools in terms of students achieving beyond their expectancy on standardized tests.

SCHOOL COST VS. SCHOOL SIZE

This section provides an analysis of the cost of small schools. Consideration was given to the following:

- Annual operating costs
- One-time capital costs
- Savings that could be achieved by closing or changing the operating pattern of 10 to 20 of the smaller schools

The conclusion is that savings of $1 to 2.5 million per year could be achieved depending on (1) how much emphasis is placed on reducing the fiscal inequity of small schools under current operating practices and (2) how many of the small schools are not provided with capital improvements.

SCHOOL OPERATING COST VS. SCHOOL SIZE

The following table shows the average per-pupil operating costs for elementary schools in Montgomery County as a function of school size:

School Size	Average Cost Per-Pupil	Variation
200	$ 1192	± $ 95
300	995	± 100
400	945	± 80
600	896	± 65
800	846	± 55

The model on which the above estimates are derived assumes that all elementary school teachers (but not principals) are paid the same. In actuality, this is not true. Some teachers are paid above the average if they have seniority or if they work on a 12-month (vs. 10-month) basis. The average was used to smooth out these variations since it would not be reasonable to reward a school for economy if the economy resulted from a young staff of predominately 10-month teachers. These statistics are shown in Figure 1. Total per-pupil costs are broken down into five major elements:

	Per-Pupil Cost 200-Pupil School	400-Pupil School
Professional staff (includes the principal and all full-time teachers)	$ 754	$ 618
Other staff (includes secretaries, aides and custodial workers)	192	115
Utilities and maintenance (includes heating, phones, painting, etc.)	84	50
Pupil services and supply (includes instruction materials, furniture, library materials, teacher specialists)	92	92
Central and area offices	70	70
	$ 1192	$ 945

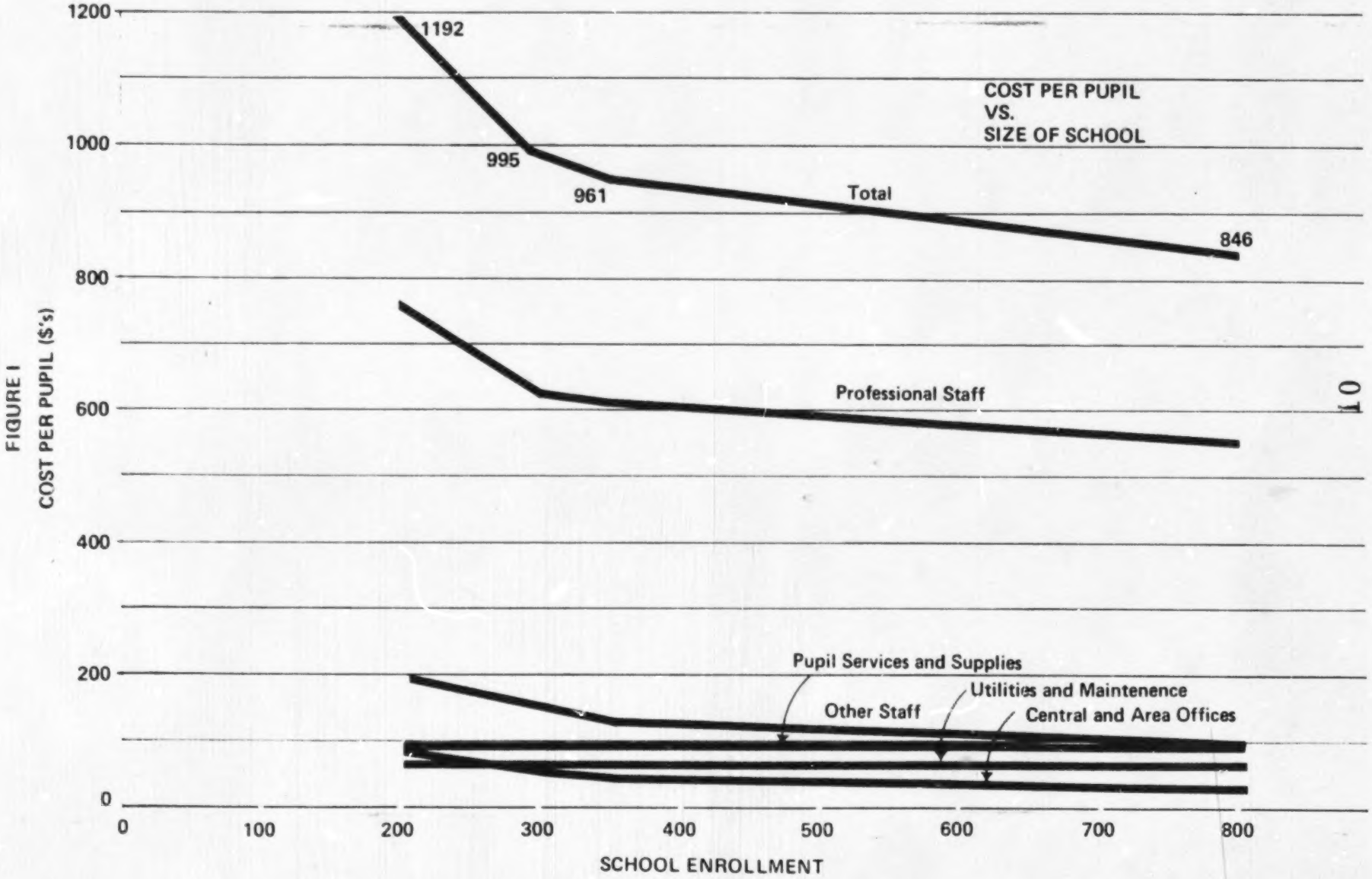
1200
1000
800
600
400
200
0
1192
995
961
846
Total
Professional Staff
Pupil Services and Supplies
Other Staff
Utilities and Maintenence
Central and Area Offices
COST PER PUPIL
VS.
SIZE OF SCHOOL
COST PER PUPIL ($'s)
0
100
200
300
400
500
600
700
800
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

FIGURE I

To summarize these differences in operating costs, the increased annual per-pupil costs for a school of 200 compared with a school of 400 are:

Professional Staff	$ 136
Other Staff	77
Utilities and Maintenance	34
	$ 245

As a result, this average small school of 200 would cost about $49,000 more per year than if the students attended the school of 400.

From these data, the following conclusions are important:

- As school size decreases. per-pupil costs gradually increase until the school size reaches 300-350. At that point, the costs start to increase more sharply so that a school with about 200 students will cost, on the average, 20 per cent more per student than a school with 300 students, and 25 per cent more than a school with 500-600 students.

- The variation in per-pupil costs for schools of the same size is comparable with variations in average cost for schools of different size. For example, an "inexpensive" school with 250 pupils costs as little per-pupil as a typical school with 300 to 325 students and less than an expensive school with 350 or more students.

- About two-thirds of the increased cost of small schools is attributable to cost of professional staff. Specifically, (1) current practices call for one principal for a school regardless of size; and (2) an additional teacher is allocated to small schools in order to avoid large classes and to provide flexibility for special situations.

- The second major factor accounting for the increased cost of small schools is the added costs of other staff: secretaries, aides, and building services employees.

ANNUAL SAVINGS FROM CLOSING A SMALL SCHOOL

If a small school is closed, students would be transferred to neighboring schools with the result that these schools would be larger. Two kinds of savings would result from the reduced staff dependent upon the extent to which the staff is allocated to receiving schools:

- The per-pupil cost for the students in the closed school will decrease because they are now enrolled in a medium or large school.

- The per-pupil costs for students in the schools which gain pupils will go down somewhat because they too benefit from economies of scale.

The following tables compare three cases. In all cases, School A is closed and its students transferred in equal parts to schools B and C.

In the Case I, three small schools are contiguous; the smallest is closed, and two medium-size schools result. In Case II, a small school is closed and its students transferred to larger schools than in Case I. In Case III, three smaller schools are combined into two larger ones.

	Original Population	Adjusted Population	Original Annual Cost	Adjusted Annual Cost
CASE I:				
A	280	0	$ 289,000	$ 0
B	300	440	300,000	414,100
C	300	440	300,000	414,100
			$ 889,000	$ 828,200
				Saving $ 60,800
CASE II:				
A	250	0	$ 273,000	0
B	350	475	336,000	437,600
C	550	675	501,000	596,600
			$1,110,000	$1,034,200
				Saving $ 75,800
CASE III:				
A	350	0	$ 336,000	0
B	350	525	336,000	$ 480,900
C	350	525	336,000	480,900
			$1,008,000	$ 961,800
				Saving $ 46,200

CAPITAL COSTS

Potential capital cost savings are of two kinds:

1. Historically, schools require some major renovation or modernization every 10 to 20 years; a savings would be realized if some small schools were not modernized.

2. There is an opportunity to gain resources for the county if closing a school (or part of it) frees it for some other use.

State policies on school construction call for modernization of a scope sufficient to last 15 years. Cosmetic or minimal repairs are to be avoided. In accordance with this policy, the following modernizations are now tentatively planned for schools with projected enrollments less than 300 in 1976:

Fiscal Year	Number of Small Schools	Average Cost Estimate
1977	4	$ 600,000
1978	2	800,000
1979	3	300,000
1980	6	550,000

These are schools whose projected enrollment ranges from 220 to 300. Their average modernization cost would be about $550,000. A school of less than 300-350 pupils generally costs about $40,000 to $60,000 more per year to operate than a school with an enrollment greater than 350. Accordingly, "one-time" modernization costs are roughly ten times greater than annual differential operating costs.

POTENTIAL COUNTY-WIDE SAVINGS

Several estimates have been made of the county-wide savings that would be possible by closing some schools with enrollments of less than 300. Significant savings could also be achieved by modifying the operation of some of these schools until either enrollment increases or a consolidation could be effected.

The following table summarizes the effect of declining enrollment on school size and indicates the opportunities that may exist to close schools:

Number of Elementary Schools:	1970	1973	1976
Under 250	8	14	26
250-299	9	9	18
300-499	66	66	66
over 500	50	53	37
Total	133	142	147

Consider two cases: In Case I, school enrollment remains as it was in September, 1973; and 10 small schools are closed. In Case II, school enrollment is as projected for September 1976; and 15 small schools are closed. The criterion and factors that were considered are discussed more fully in the section to follow.

The following table summarizes the economic impact of each case:

	Case I	Case II
Enrollment projection	1973 level	Declining
Schools closed (or satellited)	10	15
Annual operating saving	$ .750 million	$1.0 million
One-time capital (FY 75-FY 79)	$1.5 million	$2.0 million

In summary, including amortization of one-time costs, savings of $1 to 2.5 million per year could be achieved by closing or changing the operational pattern of 10 to 20 small schools.

Savings of this size represent an opportunity to provide one of the following:

- One teacher for every 500 pupils when the ultimate cost reduction is realized.
- 100 school-based specialists.
- A reduction of 2 to 4¢ per $100 in the county tax rate as applied for the general fund.

OPTIONS FOR ACTION

Previous sections of this report analyzed the educational program and cost implications of small schools. The intent of this section is to synthesize these findings and to offer "options for action" for attacking the problem of small elementary schools.

In order to determine the magnitude of the small schools' problems and the feasibility of coping with the many pertinent factors involved, the task force simulated a review of the entire small schools situation. This simulation process resulted in applying the basic criterion for identifying schools for further study, a detailing of major factors which should be used in further analysis of specific geographic subareas to determine the extent of possible school consolidations, consideration of means by which to reduce the operating cost of small schools, and consideration of other educational and/or community use of these facilities.

THE SIMULATION EXERCISE

The task force proceeded with the simulation exercise applying the criterion that when actual or projected enrollment drops below 300, the school becomes a potential candidate for consolidation because of increased operating costs. These schools were then subjected to a more detailed review and analysis which included the following factors:

1. Modernization schedule
2. Availability of space in nearby schools
3. Transportation implications
4. Long-range need for elementary school facilities in the area
5. Articulation with secondary schools
6. Socio-economic and racial balance

Modernization Schedule

Each fiscal year a five-year capital improvements program is developed in which are listed all schools to be considered for modernization within the next five years. Modernization usually consists of upgrading thermal, visual, and sonic environments within the building and also modifying facilities to accommodate changes in educational program. The average cost in recent years of modernizing an elementary school has been approximately $600,000. If an elementary school meets the criterion of size and is scheduled for modernization, careful study must be made to determine if modernization or consolidation is the better alternative.

Availability of Space in Nearby Schools

Many elementary schools, particularly in Administrative Areas 1, 2, and 4, are operating well below their rated capacities. (See Attachment 1 for comparison of September 30, 1973, enrollment with rated capacity of elementary schools.) Available space, a fact that will become even more evident if projections of continued enrollment decline are realized, makes consolidation or alternate use a very real possibility. However, it should be noted that much of this available space has been used to provide a setting for specialized program needs in elementary schools. The establishment of centers for art and music, student resource rooms, reading and math labs, and other similar specialized spaces

document this point. Many of these uses of available space are further entrenched by the fact that specialized staffing is now provided.

Transportation Implications

The study of transportation implications revealed that in many cases a large percentage of the enrollment of the school being closed could walk to the receiving school or schools. The presence of safety hazards, particularly major highways, altered this situation in some cases. However, similar conditions currently exist within many elementary service areas; and it is necessary to transport students for safety reasons.

Should distance or barriers require that students who previously walked to school be bused, an understanding must be reached with the concerned residents. If travel time can be held within acceptable limits, and if extended travel is not required on heavily traveled arteries, consolidation may receive better community acceptance.

Long-Range Needs for Elementary School Facilities in the Area

Long-range needs for space in a particular school or area of schools is perhaps the most difficult factor to deal with. Careful study of the possible use of developable land, zoning, possible changes in land use, and dramatic changes in the area such as the introduction of METRO or public housing must be carefully studied in the determination process. A review of the land use master plan of the area involved will be a necessity. In situations where the school that would be closed has a satisfactory physical plant, it would be possible to reestablish an elementary school if unforeseen enrollment growth makes this necessary.

Articulation with Secondary Schools

Articulation patterns between elementary, junior high, and senior high schools are important in providing continuity of program for students. It would be desirable if existing articulation patterns with secondary schools could be maintained for the students affected by a consolidation. In the event that articulation patterns must be changed, new patterns established should have a degree of permanence. In cases where articulation cannot be maintained, sound program planning and community involvement and understanding must be assured.

Socio-economic and Racial Balance

Any consolidations should result in an acceptable socio-economic balance of students in the receiving school or schools. If racial integration has been achieved in the school whose enrollment may be transferred to another school, efforts must be made to insure a comparable situation in the receiving school or schools. Long-range projections, while difficult to make, must be carefully considered in this important area.

REDUCING THE OPERATING COSTS OF SMALL SCHOOLS

While the task force's findings do not indicate that variation in size of school is a significant factor in influencing the quality of the educational program, the findings do clearly establish that there are increased per-pupil costs associated

with the operation of small schools. The task force examined a number of ways in which these cost differentials could be reduced or minimized until enrollment increased or until the school could be consolidated. Possible reductions were identified in the areas of staff arrangment and food service.

Reducing Staff Costs

With regard to professional staffing, one principal could serve two schools. At present, administrative cost in small schools averages approximately $100 per student. If sharing one principal is not acceptable, a position of administrative assistant to the principal could be developed with the assistant being available in one school while the principal is in the other. The assistant would handle day-to-day duties but not make decisions on educational program or staffing matters. Another alternative is to eliminate the principal position completely and have head teachers share administrative duties.

Present policy calls for schools with an enrollment of less than 300 students to receive an extra teacher to alleviate grouping and organizational problems. Cost reductions could be effected by small schools opting out of this policy. Other organizational schemes are possible, i.e., multiage grouping, combination classes, team teaching, and differentiated staffing. Creating primary schools with Grades K-3 and intermediate schools with Grades 4-6 is a possibility which could reduce the defined need for an extra teacher in small schools.

With regard to support staff, sharing of a building services manager, a position now provided for each school, is another cost saving alternative that could be considered.

Reducing Food Service Costs

A recent report by food services personnel revealed that by providing preplated lunches significant savings could be realized. Small schools are logical recipients of preplated lunches due to the high per-pupil cost of providing and operating a full kitchen in small schools. Estimates are as high as six cents per lunch being saved.

OTHER EDUCATIONAL AND/OR COMMUNITY USES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FACILITIES NO LONGER NEEDED FOR REGULAR SCHOOL USE

The task force envisions that there are two major opportunities to take advantage of all or part of an existing school site and buildings when no longer needed for regular elementary school use. The opportunities involve:

1. Possible other educational uses

2. Possible other community uses

Other Educational Uses

If an elementary school building is no longer needed for a regular elementary school, other educational uses might be considered. For example, an open enrollment school with a particular type of educational program is a possibility. Parental interest in the North Chevy Chase Elementary School seems to document

that another school of this type would attract a number of students. An elementary school building no longer needed for the regular program might be used to house a center for the arts which would draw from a broader geographic area than the typical elementary school. While adult education activities are generally carried on in the evening hours, there is often a need for instructional space during the school day.

Secondary school programs designed to meet special student needs might also be housed in elementary school buildings and in essence would become an annex to be administered by a nearby secondary school. If only a partial building is needed for any of these special educational arrangements, a sharing relationship might be worked out with other public agencies.

Alternative Community Uses

In view of potential opportunities for consolidation of some schools, a logical area for concern is to evaluate the full range of other possible public uses which would require rented or new space in the absence of utilizing available school space.

During the past year, the county executive has been developing a concept of regional-community service centers that deals with the decentralization of governmental services. A Community Services Center Steering Committee (with representation from various county departments, the Board of Education, and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission) has been formed to develop specific recommendations on the services and programs to be delivered at these centers. In allocating certain functions and staff to these centers, the basic objectives are to deliver services to the citizen in a more convenient manner, to inform the citizens of available services, and to coordinate these services in the most efficient and responsive manner. The scope and kinds of services to be provided would be tailored to the specific needs of the area.

At present, a hierarchy of three levels of service centers is envisioned which would range from regional to community to neighborhood centers. Initial emphasis would focus on the establishment of regional centers. The CSC Steering Committee has identified eight areas to receive these centers; they are Silver Spring, Wheaton, Bethesda, Rockville, Gaithersburg, Colesville, Olney, and Germantown. Additional community and neighborhood centers are to be programmed on a need basis.

Given their location and size, the possible use of abandoned elementary school space would lend itself to a community and/or neighborhood type facility with programs and services meeting specific needs of a relatively small geographic area. Similarly, the amount of space needed could range from an entire school, a wing, a group of rooms, or a single room dependent upon specific needs. Some of the possible public uses include: a range of information and referral activities plus various recreation, health, elderly, day-care/preschool education, social service, and other programs. Privately sponsored activities will also be considered as appropriate.

THE PROCESS FOR ADDRESSING SPECIFIC SMALL SCHOOL SITUATIONS

As indicated in the previous section, an actual or projected enrollment of 300 students or less would indicate that a school or a cluster of schools should be considered as candidates for reduction in operating and capital costs. This section considers the process whereby such identification is disseminated and the means whereby a specific plan would be selected for each school.

This plan could result in:

- Closing the school
- Reducing operating costs, for example, by sharing staff and/or services with a neighboring school
- Expanding the school by adding children from neighboring schools
- Changing the nature of the school (for example, to a model school)
- No substantial changes

The process recommended would involve citizens, MCPS, the Board of Education, and the County Government. In broad terms, the following steps would take place:

- The Board of Education would approve the process discussed below and would issue guidelines for reduction of the fiscal inequities caused by small schools.
- An Area Planning Committee in each administrative area would, in conjunction with the area assistant superintendent, identify individual schools or clusters of neighboring schools whose status should be reviewed.
- For each identified school or cluster of schools, a Local Evaluation Committee would review available data, develop alternative plans, obtain community views, and forward a local evaluation report to the Area Planning Committee, the superintendent, and the Board of Education.

If the Board of Education approves by March, 1974, the process just described, a schedule roughly as follows should be followed for the initial cycle:

. Establish area planning committees	April 1974
. Identify specific local evaluations needed	June 1974
. Establish local evaluation committees	June 1974
. Complete local evaluation reports	Jan. 1975
. Complete review by area committee and superintendent	Feb. 1975
. Board decision	Mar. 1975
. Initial implementation	June 1975

This proposed initial schedule provides a minimum involvement time. It would be highly desirable for the Board to approve the process earlier so that the area committees could be established earlier. Even so, it is impossible to complete the above initial cycle before June, 1975. Also, the area assistant superintendents and area community leaders are urged to establish provisional planning committees early in 1974 to start thinking about the issue of small schools in their specific situations.

The above activities should have as a primary objective insuring that citizens have the opportunity to be involved, whether members of organizations or not, at the earliest possible time in the process, and throughout the process.

THE PROCESS IN MORE DETAIL

The area planning committee is the key element in this process. It should help local communities to address the policies developed by the Board of Education; it should be the community conscience from which hard choices are made.

The committee would consist of roughly 7 to 15 individuals, all of whom would be citizens of the area except that the assistant superintendent and the area facilities planner would also be members of the committee. The size of the committee, its specific members, and other operating procedures would be determined by the area assistant superintendent in conjunction with citizen area leaders, including the head of the Advisory Council, the MCCPTA area vice president, and others. It is essential that the area planning committee have the following characteristics:

- Its members should be representative of the community.
- Its members should have the time to do their homework; many hours per week may be needed.
- The committee must have a close working relationship with the MCPS area staff yet be recognized by the local community as an independent force.

The area planning committee would have the following functions:

- Working as a partner with the area assistant superintendent, it should identify those individual schools or clusters of schools where local evaluations would be needed. In general, the criterion and factors indicated in the previous section would be used to identify specific cases; but there may be cases where local evaluation would not always conform with the guidelines.
- It should work with community leaders in the designated local areas by helping them establish local evaluation committees, by explaining the small school problem and the process, by explaining the area planning committee standards for evaluation.
- It should work with local evaluation committees by suggesting options to be considered, by helping develop schedules for deliberation, by identifying school and county staff resources that may be helpful, by describing

the experiences and ideas of other local evaluation committees, and by suggesting alternatives which should be considered in the local evaluation report.

- As the area planning committee monitors the progress of local evaluation committees, it should indicate to local committees whether reasonable alternatives are being assessed.

- It should send representatives to observe or answer questions at public forums that are held by local evaluation committees.

- When the final local evaluation report is submitted, the area committee should provide its views and recommendations to the superintendent and the Board of Education. It may be desirable for the area committee or a subcommittee to hold public forums depending on the extent to which this has been done by the local evaluation committee.

- It should work with area committees in adjacent areas if some local situations can be most effectively addressed across area boundaries.

The basic underlying objectives of the area planning committees are to ensure equitable evaluation throughout the area and to provide citizen commitment that the Board policies will be implemented.

Local evaluation committees would be established by local principals, PTA leaders, civic association leaders, and others. APC sees that a group is formed. The same criteria apply to membership on area and local committees. The main objective of this committee is to provide a local evaluation report. This report should:

- Indicate options that make sense

- Assess impact of each alternative on the quality of education

- Analyze factors which bear on options

- Identify other possible uses for the facilities if a school is closed

- Describe community reaction to each option

- Indicate the committee's preferences but also include and forward significant dissenting views

It bears repeating again that a key objective in developing the evaluation report is to seek maximum local community participation in preparing the report and to present the views of the community.

It is important that the area committee and the local committee work closely together. However, the local committee is the final authority for the local evaluation report; and the report would go directly to the Board of Education and superintendent.

The local evaluation committee is a one-time task committee, though it may be desirable to continue its activities into the implementation phase. The area

planning committee is ongoing. As such, there may be pressures to expand its charter to include other planning functions such as capital improvements and school articulation, etc. If this temptation arises, it should be resisted until the planning committee has clearly demonstrated the ability to respond to the instant problem of small schools.

It is conceivable that an area planning committee would not be capable of responding to the problem. If this happens, the area assistant superintendent and area citizen leaders should detect the situation and do something about it. If the assistant superintendent and area citizen leaders cannot agree on what to do or if their solution is not adequate, the Board of Education should be informed since it has the basic responsibility for responding to the problem of small schools.

STAFF IMPLICATIONS

The above process provides for extensive citizen participation. In order for the citizens to have the information which would be needed, school system staff must be assigned to the process. The area facility planner would be a member of the area planning committee and also would be active in the study of each local evaluation committee. Consideration should be given to the effect these activities would have on the area facilities planner role and work load.

CONCLUSIONS

1. While advantages and disadvantages regarding educational program can be attributed to the size of an elementary school, the size factor alone was not verified as a definite influence on the quality of the educational program.

2. As school size decreases, per-pupil costs gradually increase until the school size reaches 300-350. At that point the costs start to increase more sharply.

3. In many cases, consolidations can be effected involving one or more small schools and a surrounding school or schools.

4. It is possible to reduce the relatively high operating cost of small elementary schools by electing such alternatives as sharing administrative and support personnel and/or reducing special personnel allocations, thus accepting larger pupil-teacher ratios and class sizes.

5. Extensive community involvement in the form of an advisory/decision-making process is essential to community understanding and acceptance.

Based on these conclusions, the task force believe that an orderly, productive determination process for a small school and its neighboring schools can be carried out if the Board of Education adopts a small schools policy. The task force recommends that the following policy statement be adopted:

PROPOSED BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY ON SMALL SCHOOLS

WHEREAS, Elementary school enrollment has been declining in several administrative areas of the county, and this trend is expected to continue in the coming years, and

WHEREAS, This decline in elementary school enrollment has resulted in many schools which are presently enrolling or are projected to enroll 300 students or less, and

WHEREAS, Small schools do not seem to offer educational advantages when compared to medium or large schools, and

WHEREAS, The cost of operating and modernizing elementary schools with enrollment of 300 pupils or less is significantly more per pupil than in larger schools, and

WHEREAS, There is a continuing need to utilize available resources effectively, and

WHEREAS, Substantial savings in operating costs could be realized by consolidating small schools or by sharing services among small schools, and

WHEREAS, Capital budget savings can be realized by eliminating modernization projects in small schools whose enrollments can be transferred to neighboring schools with available space, and

WHEREAS, It is recognized that a community will evidence concern when faced with the possibility of a school consolidation; now therefore be it

Resolved, That a small elementary school be designated as one which has, or is projected to have within the next three years, an enrollment of 300 pupils or less; and be it further

Resolved, That it is mandatory that all small schools be reviewed annually utilizing the criterion and factors established in the Small Schools Task Force Report in order to determine their future use; and be it further

Resolved, That major modernization not be recommended for a small school until a careful review of alternatives has been carried out and its future determined; and be it further

Resolved, That the community advisory/decision making process and timetable recommended in the Small Schools Task Force Report be followed in considering the future of each small school.

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ATTACHMENT 1

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY,
CAPACITY RANGE AND ACTUAL ENROLLMENT AS OF
SEPTEMBER 30, 1973

SCHOOL	CAPACITY RANGE	ENROLLMENT 9/30/73	SCHOOL	CAPACITY RANGE	ENROLLMENT 9/30/73
Alta Vista	275-330	219	Congressional	525-630	408
Arcola	385-460	324	Connecticut Park	550-660	445
Ashburton	515-610	395	Cresthaven	480-570	358
Aspen Hill	580-690	454	Damascus	750-900	746
Ayrlawn	300-360	217	Darnestown	370-440	405
Bannockburn	480-570	321	Dennis Avenue	240-280	211
Lucy V. Barnsley	800-960	747	E. Silver Spring	320-400	311
Clara Barton	300-360	143	English Manor	725-870	544
Bel Pre	525-630	487	Fairland	675-810	664
Bells Mill	525-630	531	Fallsmead	575-690	-
Belmont	650-780	461	Farmland	625-750	580
Bethesda	550-660	505	Fernwood	450-540	290
Beverly Farms	800-960	740	Fields Road	550-660	390
Bradley	525-630	299	Flower Valley	700-840	665
Broad Acres	400-480	336	Forest Grove	392-462	310
Brookhaven	675-800	672	Forest Knolls	400-470	272
Brookmont	575-690	374	Four Corners	450-580	324
Brookview	345-410	278	Fox Chapel	600-720	-
Brown Station	730-870	813	Gaithersburg	675-810	638
Burning Tree	525-630	325	Galway	625-750	596
Burnt Mills	325-390	309	Garrett Park	425-510	348
Burtonsville	525-630	396	Georgetown Hill	725-870	596
Bushey Drive	385-460	249	Georgian Forest	442-522	371
Candlewood	450-540	493	Germantown	500-600	508
Cannon Road	650-780	663	Glen Haven	625-750	542
Carderock Springs	395-470	400	Glenallan	525-630	414
Cashell	550-660	541	Glenmont	575-690	485
Cedar Grove	330-390	309	Greenwood	635-760	415
Chevy Chase	- -	674	Grosvenor	475-570	384
Clarksburg	445-530	287	Harmony Hills	650-780	553
Cloverly	550-660	379	Highland	775-930	628
Cold Spring	650-780	782	Highland View	475-570	394
Colesville	360-430	235	Hillandale	450-540	285
College Gardens	600-720	660	Holiday Park	675-810	459
Concord	144	34	Hungerford	400-480	374

ATTACHMENT 1 cont.

SCHOOL	CAPACITY RANGE	ENROLLMENT 9/30/73	SCHOOL	CAPACITY RANGE	ENROLLMENT 9/30/73
Jackson Road	655-780	546	Seven Locks	425-510	383
Kemp Mill	585-700	383	Sherwood	620-740	516
Kensington	455-540	314	Somerset	495-590	397
Lake Normandy	575-690	509	South Lake	525-630	645
Lakewood	550-660	713	Spring Mill	325-390	249
Larchmont	350-420	312	Stedwick	650-780	-
Laytonsville	685-820	732	Stephen Knolls	156	46
Lone Oak	695-830	547	Stonegate	500-600	405
Longview	120	76	Strathmore	550-660	515
Luxmanor	325-390	360	Summit Hall	550-660	586
Lynnbrook	375-450	246	Takoma Park	460-575	523
MacDonald Knolls	350-420	221	Taylor	225-270	158
Marvvale	595-710	393	Travilah	450-540	373
McKenney Hills	375-450	267	Tuckerman	470-560	406
Meadow Hall	600-710	446	Twinbrook	895-1070	744
Mill Creek Towne	775-930	762	Viers Mill	720-900	636
Monocacy	300-360	165	Washington Grove	575-690	587
Montgomery Knolls	375-450	319	Watkins Mill	620-740	724
Montrose	450-540	365	Wayside	725-870	521
New Hampshire Est.	200-250	236	Weller Road	625-750	639
North Chevy Chase	375-450	350	West Rockville	735-880	610
North Lake	530-630	482	Westbrook	500-600	378
Oak View	500-600	411	Westover	520-620	400
Oakland Terrace	700-840	593	Wheaton Woods	825-990	637
Olney	575-690	422	Whetstone	625-750	644
Page	605-720	500	Whittier Woods	380-450	335
Park Street	560-670	410	Wood Acres	550-660	453
Parkside	300-360	180	Woodfield	400-480	327
Parkwood	445-530	441	Woodley Gardens	425-510	372
Pine Crest	375-450	363	Woodlin	325-390	286
Pleasant View	705-840	446	Woodside	350-420	351
Poolesville	520-620	525	Wyngate	625-750	502
Potomac	475-570	527			
Radnor	500-600	399			
Ritchie Park	575-690	606			
Rock Creek Forest	375-450	359			
Rock Creek Pal.	735-880	498			
Rock Creek Valley	800-960	683			
Rocking Horse Road	705-840	608			
Rolling Terrace	340-420	304			
Rollingwood	300-360	241			
Rosemary Hills	525-630	296			
Rosemont	390-460	296			
Saddlebrook	550-660	501			
Carl Sandburg	400-480	320			

Source: Budget Request, Capital Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1975, Montgomery County Public Schools, November 1, 1973

ATTACHMENT 2

THE TASK FORCE

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Barbara Center, Montgomery County Civic Federation
Nancy Cohen, Montgomery County Council Staff
Rose Crenca, Allied Civic Group
Alan Dodd (Chairman), Assistant Superintendent, Area 4

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